

**COMMISSION ON AGING
MEETING SUMMARY MINUTES
Ratner Museum
June 23, 2011**

Members Present	Members Absent
Alicia Bazan-Jimenez	Robert (Bob) Tiller
Elaine Kotell Binder	Grace Whipple
Myrna Cooperstein	
Morton A. Davis	Liaisons
Paul Del Ponte	Christopher (Chris) Borawski, MC Public Libraries
John Honig	Jeffrey Bourne, Montgomery County Recreation Department
Vivien Hsueh	Gail Gunod-Green, Housing Opportunities Commission
Charles (Chuck) Kauffman	Austin Heyman, Office of Community Partnerships Senior Fellow
Miriam Keltz	Matthew Kelleher, Fire & Rescue
Judith (Judy) Levy	Sam Korper, Commission on Health
Leslie Y. Marks	Seth Morgan, Commission on People with Disabilities
Kenneth (Ken) Montgomery	Pat Lesnick, Vital Living Committee
Barbara Muiltz	
Mona Negm	Guests
Marcia Pruzan	Bruce Adams, Office of Community Partnerships
Spencer Schron	Alan Coa
Beth Shapiro	Tim Cao
John (Jack) Sprague	Sarah Gotbaum, Older Woman's League
Judith (Judy) Welles	Betty Lam, Department of Health and Human Services
	Irwin Goldbloom
Members Absent	Lily Qi, Office of Community Partnerships
Elizabeth Brooks-Evans	Karla Silvestre, Office of Community Partnerships
Tammy Duell	
Nhora Murphy	Staff:
Rudolph (Rudy) Oswald	Odile Saddi
Joseph Petrizzo	Sharon Briggs

Elaine Binder, Commission on Aging (COA) Chair, opened the meeting and introduced two University of Maryland Guest Students: Alan Coa and Tim Coa from the Suzhou Province of China.

The Chair introduced Bruce Adams, Director of the Office of Community Partnerships (OCP) and Betty Lam, Office of Community Affairs, Department, of Health and Human Services.

Bruce Adams

Mr. Adams introduced three members of his team:

- Austin Heyman, OCP Senior Fellow
- Karla Silvestre – Latino Liaison OCP
- Lily Qi – Asian and Middle-Eastern Liaison OCP

OCP's mission is to reach out to diverse ethnic groups in the Montgomery County community (<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpstmpl.asp?url=/content/EXEC/partnerships/contact/overview.asp>). At one time the County population was 94 % Caucasian. In the late 1980's the

population changed creating a growing multi-cultural community including African Americans, Asians, and Latinos. The 2010 Census indicates that the County is now “minority/majority:” 51% minority, and 49% Caucasian. This is a great asset for a global market. The 2010 Census data also indicate that there are 120,000 County residents age 65 and older; of those, 14,500 are Asian, 8,500 Hispanic, and 12,800 African-American. However, because of the way the US Census questions are phrased, there are segments that are not easily identified, such as continental Africans and people from the Caribbean

To reach diverse ethnic groups OCP works with nonprofit and faith communities. Isaiah Leggett, Montgomery County’s Executive, always has worked to reach out to diverse communities and the elderly. Three Senior Fellow positions have been established to help accomplish this effort. These fellow positions are part-time positions with mature and seasoned professionals with an expertise needed by the County. OCP liaisons are assigned to Hispanic, Asian, Middle Eastern, Caribbean, Continental African and the faith communities. Within each community there is considerable diversity of leadership, organizational structure, and cultural issues that affect and guide OCP’s outreach efforts.

The OCP conducts various activities to reach out to diverse senior populations:

- 1) OCP staff participated in the 2008 Senior Summit, which included representation from a number of diverse population groups;
- 2) In March 2009, OCP staff met with ‘Aging and Disability Services’ Jay Kenney to discuss ways to enhance efforts for outreach and education in diverse senior populations. Lily Qi offered to include senior issues in free space offered by both Chinese and Korean newspapers. Lily offered to assist with translations.
- 3) In May 2009, OCP staff met to discuss issues of various senior ethnicities with HHS staff. Discussion covered: findings of the 2007 Towson Report, which recommended a plan for building a comprehensive aging plan for the County; concerns specific to the various ethnic communities; outcomes from the ethnic 2007 summit convened by Mr. Leggett; OCP coordinators’ perspectives; a proposed project with partners for a Livable Community (which subsequently was not funded); the Temple University study on immigrants. The Towson Report “*Imagining an Aging Future for Montgomery County, MD*” can be found in the COA orientation notebook, and on the County website:
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/hhs/ads/PDFs/mcreport7-07.pdf>.
- 4) In 2010, OCP assisted in a search to encourage greater representation by Middle Eastern, Hispanic, and Asian communities on the COA.

Karla Silvestre, OCP Liaison to the Hispanic Community:

The Hispanic community currently is a young population; however, in 10-20 years the senior population will have grown enormously. An advisory group meets eight times each year and works with faith and non-profit organizations. Hispanic audiences rely heavily on radio for information. There are at least six Spanish language radio stations and six Spanish newspapers in the County that serve this community.

Ms. Silvestre encouraged the COA to work closely with OCP to help identify messages for the Hispanic community and share information with ethnic groups, including two Hispanic Chambers of Commerce.

Ms. Lily Qi, OCP Liaison to both the Asian and Middle Eastern Communities, shared the following observations about the County's Asian and Middle Eastern communities:

- Three quarters of these communities are comprised of immigrants, more than half of whom arrived in this country after 1990.
- The multiple generations concept is being changed
- More mature communities are more organized
- Populations in these communities speak many different languages and have tremendous diversity and disparities in economics, social structure, and language.
- There is a great gap between needs and services,
- There is a need to focus on providing affordable services to ethnic communities
- Most seniors do not meet federal guidelines for benefits
- Many seniors do not drive and do not speak English, which generate a dependency on others
- Most immigrants belong to faith groups

In summary, the County can improve outreach by connecting with community leaders and better use of print media. (There are 13 Chinese language newspapers, but no radio channel for Asian populations.)

Ms. Betty Lam, HHS Office of Community Affairs, explained activities her office undertakes in helping diverse and ethnic groups access HHS services. OCA staff members:

- Make presentations about HHS services at health fairs, community, and religious events;
- Share information within networks and coalitions.
- Surveyed 13 organizations (31 persons) about the HHS workshops, which resulted in a decision to offer "HHS 101" sessions for these populations.
- Held workshops on grant applications;
- Train leaders of immigrant communities about HHS services so that they, in turn, can present that information at various community events.

These strategies have proven successful in promoting healthier lifestyles and diabetes nutrition education with the African American community. Shawn Brennan from Aging and Disability Services also has worked on bone density and osteoporosis issues in partnership with the American African Health Initiative on bone density issues and with Asian senior communities.

To meet some of the language needs, HHS has a protocol for translating key application forms and vital documents for various ethnic communities; their organizations are essential in helping the County perform these translations. The County website also has a feature for automated language translation in the five top languages used in the County.

COA members reflected upon the Melting Pot that is our society, and how that affects the long-term vision for our County.

Communication in the English language is key to the long-term goal of integration. Additional data regarding the needs of ethnic seniors is needed.

Efforts are needed to assist members of ethnic groups who are recent arrivals. There is a need to build capacity and empower these communities to help their residents and develop their circles of influence.

Heritage events help people better understand and build trust among one another. A County-wide heritage festival is being planned for October 2011.

A recent HHS initiative has successfully assisted foreign-trained health professionals in obtaining their licenses to practice in Maryland. The current waiting list has more than 2,000 persons applying to take English classes as a second language, and that list continues to grow. Older adults are encouraged to volunteer to teach English to new immigrants.

COA ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

- COA members approved the May 26, 2011, meeting minutes.
- Marylyn Mower, Director of the Senior Nutrition Program, retired the end of May 2011. On Friday, June 3rd, 2011, the Program's food contractor, suddenly and unexpectedly filed for bankruptcy. Over that weekend, Melanie Polk, Acting Senior Nutrition Program Manager and Jay Kenney, Chief, Aging and Disability Services, negotiated a contract with a new food contractor over that weekend. Because of this quick action, the program's 5,000 seniors missed only one day's meal. The Senior Nutrition Program has a contract for one year with the new food vendor.
- **Treasurer's Report** – Vivien Hsueh
Twenty-six COA members paid for their May 26, 2011, Annual Meeting lunch. The current account balance is \$1,472.92.

UPDATES:

Summer Studies

All COA members and other interested parties are encouraged to participate in COA summer studies. Summer Study meeting minutes will be distributed to COA members.

- **Housing**– Leslie Marks

The Housing Summer Study will focus on accessory apartments, visitability, and affordable senior housing. Members from both Montgomery County Council members Elrich and Floreen's staff attended the first meeting and offered their support for accessory apartments.

Currently, applicants must go through a lengthy and costly process to get a special exemption qualifying an apartment as an accessory apartment. A requirement for sufficient parking also is a challenging issue. Visitability features, which currently are voluntary, are essential for persons with mobility impairments. The County Planning Board will consider proposed updates to the County Zoning Ordinance this fall.

- **Mental Health Summer Study Program** – Judy Levy

Co-chairs Judy Levy and Tammy Duell are reaching out to diverse groups for participation in this Summer Study. It was noted that there is a strong stigma about mental illness in the Asian community, and there are not enough trained professionals with diverse language capabilities to assist in this area. The first meeting will be dedicated to learning about current services and gaps. The second meeting will focus on best practices. Council member George Leventhal has expressed an interest in this Summer Study.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- **Communications and Community Outreach Committee**– Spencer Schron and Judy Welles

The next meeting will focus on communication with COA stakeholders, including those from major ethnic communities. Nora Murphy will share her expertise in communicating with Hispanic seniors. The Committee also will review the current major County publications for seniors and make recommendations for improvements (content, branding, and appearance) in future versions.

Producer Michael Bruen now reproduces the Seniors Today (ST) Cable show on DVD and distributes them to senior centers and key senior housing sites. He also produces a press release about each show. The most recent show features:

- Jay Kenney covering senior demographics and the budget;
- The Montgomery County Fair (July 19th – 23rd); and
- A demonstration on assisted devices.

Upcoming fall ST topics include social networking, Fire Safety Month, and Senior Health Insurance Program.

- **Public Policy Committee (PP)** – Jack Sprague

The Committee is planning a November annual legislative breakfast with the Annapolis Delegation. Talking points will be developed and distributed to all COA members; it will be important include the economic contributions of older adults to the County. County Economic Development Director Steve Silverman and others are meeting with Chambers of Commerce to promote the economic power of seniors in the County.

The Committee is reviewing the impact of federal cuts on older adults in our community and is examining whether the COA should take positions and send letters to our senators and congressional representatives. Rudy Oswald drafted a letter from the COA to Senator Benjamin Cardin. Senator Cardin responded that he would use information from that letter in his efforts to oppose budget cuts to vital programs for seniors.

Finally, the *Gazette* reported that Montgomery College would no longer provide senior discounts on art classes.

DRAFT SENIOR AGENDA

The Chair opened discussion about the draft Montgomery County Senior Agenda, which is an outgrowth of the COA's "*Call to Action*" created Last year. The COA sent a letter to all candidates for local public office; only County Executive Leggett responded. Topics for the draft Montgomery County Senior Agenda resulted from a brainstorming session at the COA Annual meeting and include:

- Commitment to Seniors
- Transportation
- Housing
- Recreation/Leisure
- Health and Wellness

- Security and Safety
- Communications
- Employment and Volunteering

COA members asked to include data collection and a vision statement in the document. The Chair will meet with a small Task Group over the summer to further refine the document. Judy Welles and Beth Shapiro offered to assist. Any interested COA member should contact Elaine by e-mail.

Once finalized, the COA will review the document for adoption before sharing it with co-chairs of the Senior Subcabinet. In other discussion, it was mentioned that the Senior Sub-Cabinet departments continue to research and identify measurable outcome measures. In addition, it was recommended that the COA review the Vision 2030 document prepared by Maryland National Park and planning Commission and the Recreation Department.

LIAISON REPORTS

- **Vital Living Committee (VLC)** – Pat Lesnick

The VLC Navigator is available at County libraries. The Multi Ethnic Committee is planning an October 16 festival that will include the Sister Cities with the County. The JCA Job Expo was well attended with 70 persons who reported having been hired and 3,500 participants. Next year's Job Expo is already scheduled for May 21, 2012.

- **Housing Opportunity Commission (HOC)** - Gail Gunod-Green

Fifteen percent of residents at Waverly House in Bethesda speak English, 25% speak Chinese, 20% speak Russian and a small percentage speaks Vietnamese.

HOC partners with Chinese American Senior Services Association, Interages, Rainbow Adult Day Care, Home Care Partners, University of Maryland School of Nursing, and the County African American Health Initiative. Eligible residents are also helped in becoming naturalized US citizens and in identifying available and appropriate federally funded benefits. Because of the many language barriers for residents, HOC seeks English as a Second Language (ESOL) volunteers. The Home Care grant that provides for home care and in-home services for certain HOC residents expires in September and no new funding has been identified thus far.

- **Department of Recreation** – Jeff Bourne

A new Mid-County Community Recreation Center is opening with a Dedication Ceremony and Open House on July 9th. All are invited to visit this beautiful facility located at 2004 Queensguard Road in Silver Spring.

The White Oak Recreation Center is under construction with an opening date targeted for May 2012. There will be a need to identify FY13 funds to operate staffed senior programs in the facility. Aging and Disability Services and the Department of Transportation are collaborating with the Recreation Department to restore 11 Senior Neighborhood programs that were eliminated in the FY11 budget, and refunded for FY12. The target date for operation is mid September 2011.

- **Commission on People with Disabilities** – Seth Morgan

The Commission is on summer recess. Seth Morgan will now replace John Miers, former liaison to the COA, who passed away after a very long illness.

A County workgroup is focusing on abuse of disabled parking permits. The group is meeting with the Police Department to explore an enforcement program with trained volunteers who would be allowed to issue tickets. Mr. Morgan requested a letter of support from the COA. The Health and Wellness Committee will consider this request and make a recommendation to the COA.

- **Montgomery County Government Libraries** – Chris Borawski

Mildred Nance will be the new liaison to the COA from the Montgomery County Libraries,

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COA member Miriam Kelty, who serves as the COA representative to the HHS Adult Public Guardianship Review Board, expressed appreciation for the social workers in that program and the high quality of their work with clients.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 AM